

Notes for Clarinetists: A Guide to the Repertoire, Albert R. Rice [book review]

By: [Sonia Archer-Capuzzo](#)

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Abstract:

Albert R. Rice is a well-known author of scholarly works about the clarinet and its history, literature, and development. His research on the clarinet in the Baroque and Classical periods has been praised as a "massive and rather daunting organizational task" (Eric Hoeprich, review of *The Baroque Clarinet*, by Albert R. Rice, *Notes* 50, no. 1 [September 1993]: 187) involving "a vast amount of data" (Alissa Abrams, review of *The Clarinet in the Classical Period*, by Albert R. Rice, *Notes* 62, no. 3 [March 2006]: 729). Like his earlier works, Rice's most recent publication, *Notes for Clarinetists: A Guide to the Repertoire*, is thoroughly researched and full of useful detail. It provides a valuable store of information about the clarinet's core repertoire.

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Article:

*****Note: Full text of article below**

As a reference work, flutists of all sorts will appreciate Dzapo's volume. How convenient it is to have a book close at hand from which to gain quick background information on specific works or composers. The availability of paperback and e-versions of this book will greatly increase accessibility for students and amateurs, who may want to purchase their own copies rather than relying solely on their local or university libraries. While the volume may not completely serve as the in-depth resource that is missing from current literature on the flute (as is noted in the author's preface), it will provide an encyclopedic starting point for both students and performers who may find their appetites whetted for deeper contextual exploration in the future.

Notes for Flutists is listed as the first book in a new series—*Notes for Performers*—of which Dzapo will serve as series editor. A volume devoted to clarinet works was released in January 2017 (see the review in the present issue of *Notes*), and subsequent volumes will presumably represent repertoires of other orchestral instruments. I suspect performers across the orchestra will be thrilled with the prospect of a book that highlights their favorite literature, and a new resource to be used both as a pedagogical tool and for brushing up on historical study. Certainly flutists—students, teachers, amateurs, and professionals alike—will celebrate having an item on their bookshelves that inspires them to revisit their own musical favorites or to explore classics they have not yet played.

K. DAWN GRAPES
Colorado State University

Notes for Clarinetists: A Guide to the Repertoire. By Albert R. Rice. (Notes for Performers.) New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. [xv, 281 p.

ISBN 9780190205201 (hardcover), \$105; 9780190205218 (paperback), \$27.95. Also available as an e-book (ISBN and price varies).] Music examples, illustrations, bibliography, index.

Albert R. Rice is a well-known author of scholarly works about the clarinet and its history, literature, and development. His research on the clarinet in the Baroque and Classical periods has been praised as a "massive and rather daunting organizational task" (Eric Hoeprich, review of *The Baroque Clarinet*, by Albert R. Rice, *Notes* 50, no. 1 [September 1993]: 187) involving "a vast amount of data" (Alissa Abrams, review of *The Clarinet in the Classical Period*, by Albert R. Rice, *Notes* 62, no. 3 [March 2006]: 729). Like his earlier works, Rice's most recent publication, *Notes for Clarinetists: A Guide to the Repertoire*, is thoroughly researched and full of useful detail. It provides a valuable store of information about the clarinet's core repertoire.

The second volume in the *Notes for Performers* series produced by Oxford University Press, *Notes for Clarinetists* provides a list of some of the most important compositions for solo clarinet, clarinet and piano, or clarinet and orchestra (p. xi). The series follows two key guidelines: (1) pieces must be among the best known for the instrument, and (2) only one work may be chosen per composer. In his preface, Rice further stipulates that he chose repertoire for its musical quality, frequency of performance, and "substantial and creative use of the clarinet" (p. xii). These criteria are somewhat subjective, leading to a list of compositions that includes a few works that might not make everyone's inventory of clarinet standards. However, the vast majority of the pieces described in the book are important and popular contributions to the clarinet repertoire.

Each chapter in *Notes for Clarinetists* focuses on a different composition, organized alphabetically by the last names of the composers, ranging from Arthur Benjamin to Carl Maria von Weber. Chapters follow a standard formula consisting of biographical material on the composers, a short explanation of their compositions, and an analysis of their specific pieces for clarinet. For each piece, Rice also outlines its technical and expressive challenges and how it might best fit into a concert program. Although each chapter is fewer than ten pages in length, Rice manages to pack a great deal of detail into a small space. In addition to tempo indications (such as *allegro*), he often provides metronome markings, stipulating when these markings are his own suggestions. He augments his simple form charts for each piece or movement with discussions of important aspects of the composition, including pitch, rhythm, meter, and dynamics. There is some flexibility built into this format, which allows Rice to discuss a wide-ranging selection of works. For example, in the section on William O. Smith's *Variants for Solo Clarinet*, he concentrates on advanced techniques such as multiphonics and flutter tonguing, but in the next chapter, about Louis Spohr's Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra, op. 26, his focus shifts to musical form and how the friendships between Spohr, Johann Simon Hermstedt, and various clarinet makers influenced the development of the instrument (pp. 206–19).

In some cases, Rice corrects mistakes in specific editions or recommends which editions the performer should favor over others. This advice can be quite helpful, for example in the case of the Sonata for Clarinet and Piano by Francis Poulenc. Rice points out that the first edition has a number of “notation ambiguities” (p. 163) because Poulenc died before the work was pre-

miered. In spite of multiple revisions and much study over the years, numerous errors persisted until the publication of the sixteenth edition in 2006 (p. 164).

Similarly, Rice discusses the many different editions and arrangements of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra, K. 622 (pp. 128–35). Originally written for the basset-horn, the piece is now more frequently performed on a modern clarinet in A. Because the range of the basset-horn extends lower than that of an A clarinet, arrangements of the concerto often alter the shape of the musical line. However, many newer editions of the work draw more heavily on the original score, resulting in a musical line that more accurately mirrors what one would hear from the basset clarinet. Rice lists several of these editions in a footnote and then proceeds to suggest recordings, articles about performing practices, and even makers of basset-horns. By following Rice's recommendations and conducting further research, students and professionals may be inspired to find new and interesting ways to hear and perform the Mozart concerto.

There are a few confusing moments in the book, usually due to the difficulties inherent in examining musical concepts in detail in a short essay. For example, when discussing Carl Nielsen's Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra, Rice refers to a musical section “with a flowing and expressive F theme of clarinet and strings” (p. 150). For the less-attentive reader, this sentence could be confusing. Is Rice referring to theme designated as “F” in a formal analysis of a multi-theme work, or is he speaking of a theme in the key of F major? The question is quickly answered by referring to the form chart for this piece, which makes clear that he was referring to the key of F in the B

(second) theme, but this type of thoughtful reading can be challenging for younger students. It will be up to teachers to inform their students of this issue to help them get the most from this book.

Further, to fully understand these analyses and benefit from the many insights Rice offers about the technical and musical characteristics of each piece, the reader should have a score in hand (p. xiii). In spite of twenty years of clarinet study and experience performing many of these works, I found it difficult at times to follow along with Rice's explanations of the pieces without consulting a score. Listening to recordings as part of this learning process would also prove invaluable.

Though the *Notes for Performers* series is geared toward undergraduate students, the series editor, Kyle Dzapó, argues that all clarinetists can benefit from reading this book (p. vii); indeed, it fills a gap in its coverage of the representative solo repertoire of the instrument. Rice's preface is a must-read, especially for the undergraduate or young musician, as it explains the general organization of the book, how features such as pitch will be discussed, what to expect from the analyses, and so on. The book can easily serve as a text for a clarinet repertoire class or as a beginning resource for more in-depth research into a specific piece, composer, or style. Although the hardcover edition would likely break many students' budgets, the volume is available in a more affordable paperback edition and an e-book version for library subscriptions.

Notes for Clarinetists is a meticulously researched volume that not only provides a wealth of information to readers but also leads them to more resources. The extensive footnotes combined with a nearly twenty-page bibliography give the readers ample guidance for future research. Sources are up to date and run the gamut from well-

known reference works to more obscure titles such as dissertations. The book allows professional or student clarinetists to access basic information quickly and gain insight into sources to consult for further exploration. In his preface, Rice writes that, "Clarinetists know that scholarship enriches performance and they are eager to utilize contextual information to prepare and present concerts" (p. xi). This book can serve as an essential part of the research process for performance preparation and as a resource for writing performance notes.

Notes for Clarinetists also fills a gap in clarinet scholarship. While numerous books cover the history of the instrument, performance techniques, individual composers, or specific pieces, there have been few surveys of the core repertoire for the instrument. Rice's volume achieves this admirably. It provides a treasure trove of information that can get any clarinetist started on the road to understanding and performing some of the most important pieces in the repertoire. While each chapter provides a snapshot of a musical work, the organizational formula ties the individual chapters together in a cohesive whole. Rice's enthusiasm for the literature is evident throughout, making this an informative and enjoyable read. *Notes for Clarinetists* deserves a place on every clarinetist's shelf.

SONIA ARCHER-CAPUZZO

University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Bassoon Reed Making: A Pedagogic History. By Christin Schillinger. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016. [xiii, 153 p. ISBN 9780253018151 (hardcover), \$30; ISBN 9780253018236 (e-book), varies.] Illustrations, diagrams, appendices, bibliography, index.

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